

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-197-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: Grazing Record #0501526, #0501502
Allotments:
Yellow Jacket - South #06826
Yellow Jacket #06858

PROJECT NAME: Yellow Jacket Ranch Projects:
Change-in-Kind of Livestock
Boundary Fence Construction
Cattleguard Installations
Construct Reservoir

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Township 2 North, Range 92 West
Sections 16 and 17

APPLICANT: Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch
Bill Stewart, Ranch Manager

ISSUES AND CONCERNS: Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) analysis has not been performed on the channels within these allotments. In addition, it has been determined there are not any grazing trend sites identified or developed. Therefore, study sites will be established during the summer of 2005 by the WRFO Range Specialist, Hydrologist and Wildlife Biologist. Selection of these key areas will be for monitoring livestock grazing use with permanent, repeatable photo plots and permanent, repeatable line transects to measure herbaceous ground cover and frequency, and aspen regeneration. These PFC assessments and study sites will be performed in July 2006 in preparation of the permit renewal.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: BLM Lease #0501502 authorizes livestock grazing on allotment #06858, Yellow Jacket. Currently this lease allows 500 head of sheep to graze from July 15 to November 3. Term of the current lease is March 1, 1996 to February 28, 2006; therefore a lease renewal will be required at that time.

BLM Lease #0501526 authorizes livestock grazing on allotment #06826, Yellow Jacket – South. Currently this lease allows 510 head of sheep to graze from September 15 to September 30. This lease was acquired through a base property lease agreement with John Economos that was initiated on January 1, 1998 and renewed January 1, 2003. Term of the current lease is January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2007; therefore a lease renewal will be required at that time.

The Bureau of Land Management has the authority to authorize livestock grazing consistent with the provisions of the *Taylor Grazing Act*, *Public Rangelands Improvement Act*, *Federal Land Policy and Management Act*, and *White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*. This Plan/EIS has included the *Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado*.

Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, Ltd. was purchased by the current owners in 1987. Traditionally, this ranch has been a sheep operation. In the fall of 2004, the ranch sold their sheep and bought cattle to run a cow/calf operation. This ranch has additional private acreage and BLM permits, which are administered out of the Little Snake Field Office, Craig, Colorado.

On January 1, 2003 the Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch entered into a base property lease agreement with John Economos for the Yellow Jacket – South Allotment (#06826) current term to expire December 31, 2007. The Yellow Jacket (#06858) and Yellow Jacket – South (#06826) allotments share a boundary; there is not a fence to separate the two allotments. Additionally, a fence previously existed between the private lands in Sections 8 and 9; and the public lands in Section 16 and 17 of Township 2 North, Range 92 West but is no longer in functioning condition. It is unknown when the fence was built or when it became non-functional. Some of the posts are visible but generally all of the wires are on the ground and covered by vegetation.

A functioning fence exists between Township 3 North, Range 92 West, Section 33 and 34 and Township 2 North, Range 92 West, Section 4 with the northern pasture now called Private Pasture A. A new fence constructed in 2002 Township 2 North, Range 92 West, Sections 16 and 17 created a private pasture in the Yellow Jacket – South Allotment, #06826; called Private Pasture B. Because of this new fence the private lands will be removed from consideration in the BLM Lease #0501526. Rio Blanco County (RBC) Road #48 runs through the length of these two leases and accounts for approximately five acres of road versus lands used for grazing purposes.

The areas listed in the two leases above will become Pasture 1, (see attached map for information on all of the above referenced pastures) which is explained in detail in the proposed action.

Pasture Number	Elevation (ft)	Ecological Site
Pasture 1	7,000' - 8,600 '	Mountain Shrub and Aspen Woodlands

The grazing allotments within the White River Field Office (WRFO) have been placed in one of three management categories that define the intensity of management: (1) improve, (2) custodial and (3) maintain. These categories broadly define rangeland management objectives in response to an analysis of an allotment's resource characteristics, potential, opportunities, and needs. This allotment has been categorized as a "C" or Custodial on which no significant problems /issues/resource conflicts have been identified. Management of the allotment is satisfactory.

Annual precipitation varies from approximately 16 to 24 inches. Snowfall, which accounts for well over half of the annual precipitation, occurs from October to May and accumulates on the ground from November through April. This landscape has high potential for growth and regrowth of all herbaceous species along with retained moisture capabilities. The proposed action can be divided into two elevation zones with dominate vegetative classifications.

Proposed Action: Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, Ltd. would like to change the kind of livestock permitted from sheep to cattle. In order to operate this allotment as proposed, Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, Ltd. proposes to construct approximately ½ mile of barbed, four-wire lay-down fence on the section line between Sections 16 and 15 as per BLM standards with approval by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to make Pasture 1 a complete and enclosed pasture. This fence will become the new boundary fence between the BLM and the White River National Forest. The ranch will construct a small reservoir, approximately 20 foot X 20 foot, to catch water from road runoff and a nearby spring just off of RBC Road #15 at a site identified by BLM personnel. The ranch also proposes to install two cattleguards; one 16 foot cattleguard at the boundary of USFS and BLM on RBC Road #48 and one 24 foot cattleguard at the intersection of RBC Road #15 and #48. Because these cattleguards are located on county roads the construction will be pursuant to structure designs approved by the Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge Department.

The proposal is to generate one pasture between the two allotments and call it Pasture 1 under the Yellow Jacket (0501502) and the Yellow Jacket – South (0501526) Leases. Pasture 1 has approximately 1,927 acres of private lands and 647 acres of public lands. The proposal is to run 100 pairs plus 5 bulls starting July 15 until August 25. It has been discussed and agreed upon with Bill Stewart, Ranch Manager, a 50% utilization level will be instituted and he has agreed to this level. Upon completion of the proposed fence and any necessary reconstruction or repairs to all other fences requiring upgrading to functioning condition this pasture will be whole. The creation of this pasture will aid in a restricted turn on date of July 15 or later to aid in any potential issues or conflicts. The proposed action was developed in conjunction with the current ranch manager, Bill Stewart.

The percent public land (% PL), which is the percentage of BLM (active) AUMs in relation to total AUMs (BLM, private AUMs) was recalculated for both allotments and will remain the same as follows: Yellow Jacket-South, #06826 at 100% PL and Yellow Jacket, #06858 at 22% PL.

Proposed grazing leases will be authorized as follows:

Allotment	Livestock #/Kind	Grazing Period	% PL.	AUMs
Yellow Jacket-South, #06826 (Northern Portion)	105/Cattle	7/15 to 7/19	100%	16
Yellow Jacket, #06858	105/Cattle	7/20 to 8/25	22%	29

Grazing Permit Terms and Conditions:

The following terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 4130.3 would be included in the grazing permit issued under this alternative:

1. Thirty (30) days prior to turnout, the permittee will submit a grazing application for the grazing year to the BLM for approval. The application will include the anticipated turnout dates, numbers of animals, and the sequence that the allotments and/or pastures will be used.
2. The permittee or lessee must provide reasonable administrative access across private and leased lands to the BLM for the orderly management and protection of the public lands, as outlined 43 CFR 4130.3-2(h).
3. Grazing use will occur as per the EA# CO-110-04-197EA, and the new grazing leases upon their approval and signatures.
4. It is unlawful for the permittee, agents or employees to knowingly disturb or collect cultural, historical or paleontological materials on public lands. If cultural, historical or paleontological materials are found, including human remains, funerary items or objects of cultural patrimony. The permittee is to stop activities that might disturb such materials, and notify the authorized officer immediately.
5. No grazing use can be authorized under this grazing lease during any period of delinquency in the payment of amounts due in settlement for unauthorized grazing use.
6. Grazing use authorized under this grazing lease may be suspended, in whole or in part, for violation by the permittee/lessee of any of the provisions of the rules or regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
7. This grazing lease is subject to cancellation, in whole or in part, at any time because of:
 - a. Noncompliance by the permittee/lessee with rules and regulations now or hereafter approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
 - b. Loss of control by the permittee/lessee of all or a part of the property upon which it is based.
 - c. A transfer of grazing preference by the permittee/lessee to another party.
 - d. A decrease in the lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management within the allotment(s) described herein.
 - e. Repeated willful unauthorized grazing use
8. This grazing lease is subject to the provisions of executive Order NO. 11246 of September 24, 1965, as amended, which sets forth nondiscrimination clauses. A copy of this order may be obtained from the authorized officer.
9. The permittee/lessee must own or control and be responsible for the management of the livestock authorized to graze under this grazing permit/lease.

10. The authorized officer may require counting and/or additional/special marking or tagging of the livestock authorized to graze under this grazing permit/lease.
11. The permittee's/lessee's grazing case file is available for public inspection as required by the Freedom of Information Act.
12. In order to improve livestock distribution on the public lands, all salt blocks and/or mineral supplements will not be placed within a 1/4 mile of any riparian area, wet meadow, or watering facility (either permanent or temporary) unless stipulated through a written agreement or decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4130.3-2(c).
13. In accordance with 43 CFR 4130.8-1(F): Failure to pay grazing bills within 15 days of the due date specified in the bill shall result in a late fee assessment. Payment made later than 15 days after the due date, shall include the appropriate late fee assessment. Failure to make payment within 30 days may be a violation of 43 CFR Sec. 4140.1(b) (1) and shall result in action by the authorized officer under 43 CFR Secs. 4150.1 and 4160.1-2 (Trespass).
14. Regarding the Grazing Authorization #0501526, the John Economos base property lease agreement on the Yellow Jacket – South Allotment (#06826) between he and the Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, LLC: The cattle authorized on this allotment will be dependent upon the control of both the north and south sides of Rio Blanco County Road #48. If and/or when the control is lost the Yellow Jacket – South Allotment (#06826) will revert back to a sheep allotment with the carrying capacity to be determined at that time.

Monitoring and Evaluation: It has been determined that no trend sites have ever been identified or developed for either allotments. Therefore, study sites will be identified over the summer of 2005 by the WRFO Range Specialist, Hydrologist and Wildlife Biologist to select key areas to monitor livestock grazing use with permanent, repeatable photo plots and permanent, repeatable line transects to measure herbaceous ground cover and frequency and aspen regeneration.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative the proposed change-in-kind of livestock, boundary fence, cattleguards, and pit reservoir would not be changed or constructed.

ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: 2-10, 2-22 through 2-26

Decision Language: The Proposed Action implements the White River ROD/RMP Livestock Grazing Management objective on page 2-22 to 2-26:

“To maintain or enhance a healthy rangeland vegetation composition and species diversity, capable of supplying forage at a sustained yield to meet the demand for livestock grazing. Provide for adequate forage plant growth and/or re-growth opportunity necessary to: 1) replenish the plants food reserves; and 2) produce sufficient seed to meet the reproduction needs necessary to maintain an ecological presence in the plant community.”

“Sustain a landscape composed of plant community mosaics that represent successional stages and distribution patterns that are consistent with natural and regeneration regimes, and compatible with the goals identified in Standard Three of the Standards for Public Land Health (pages 2-10), also as stated, the goal of the livestock management program is to improve the rangeland forage resource by managing toward a desired plant community (potential natural plant community).”

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 302 OF FLPMA RELATIVE TO THE COMB WASH GRAZING DECISION: A review of applicable planning documents and a thoughtful consideration of the new issues and new demands for the use of the public lands involved with these allotments have been made. This analysis concludes that the current multiple use allocation of resources is appropriate.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The proposed pit reservoir and fence line are not located within a fifteen mile radius of any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas. The Flattops Wilderness Area (PSD class-1 airshed) is located approximately 15 miles to the southwest of the proposed work area. Construction of the reservoir and fence will have little effect on local air quality with exception to dry periods when gusty winds may temporarily increase fugitive dust levels. Air quality within the Flattops Wilderness Area will not be affected. Overall, construction operations should not greatly compromise National Ambient Air Quality Standards

(NAAQS) for particulate mater which calls for a maximum 24-hour average to be less than or equal to 150 µg/m³.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction of the pit reservoir will reduce vegetation and ground cover within the work area leaving soils exposed to eolian processes. As a result, elevated levels of fugitive dust can be expected in the short term (1-2 growing seasons) during dry and windy conditions.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Revegetate disturbed surfaces associated with construction of the pit reservoir.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: There are no recorded sites in the proposed project area. A Class III Pedestrian Survey was completed 100 feet on both sides of approximately ½ mile of flagged proposed barbed, four-wire lay-down fence on the section line between Sections 16 and 15 including the proposed pit reservoir to catch water from a nearby spring and road runoff in the two proposed locations flagged for purposes of this analysis.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There are no foreseen impacts on cultural resources resulting from this proposed project

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines

for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Noxious weeds of concern include houndstongue, yellow toadflax, Canada, Bull and Musk thistles.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The above described noxious weeds are known to occur in the area in relatively small occurrences, and if treated would maintain the native plant communities composition and productivity.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: New impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative. Although, if noxious weeds are not treated, the native plant community composition and productivity goal would most likely fail as well.

Mitigation: Any identified population(s) of a noxious weed species will be dealt with on a case-by-case as needed basis. From the White River Resource Area Record of Decision (ROD)/Resource Management Plan (RMP), Appendix B, #179, a Pesticide Use Proposal will be prepared and approved prior to spraying. All spraying would be under the control of a certified applicator. Herbicides must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: An array of migratory birds fulfills nesting functions in the project area's mountain shrub and aspen communities from late May through late July. Species associated with these communities are typical and widely represented in the Resource Area and region. Those bird populations identified as having higher conservation interest (i.e., Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program) include Cordilleran flycatcher and MacGillivray's warbler (riparian habitats), Virginia's warbler and green-tailed towhee (shrublands), and broad-tailed hummingbird, red-naped sapsucker, purple martin, and violet-green swallow (aspen). With the exception of the uncommon and colonial purple martin, these birds are well distributed at appropriate densities in proper habitats within the allotment and region's extensive like-habitats. Purple martins are typically distributed in small colonies in mature aspen closely associated with perennial streams. This habitat does not occur in this allotment and martins were not encountered during multiple allotment visits during the breeding season of 2005.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed grazing schedule would involve a cattle turnout date of mid-July--a date when the bulk of non-game reproductive activity has been completed. The gradual attrition of herbaceous understory production through late July and early August (i.e., essentially dormant season use) under these stocking rates should have no effective influence on new broods securing sufficient forage (i.e., insects or grains) or the outcome of subsequent renesting efforts. The construction of proposed facilities (i.e., fence, cattleguards, and pond initiated in mid-July) would also occur after the majority of nesting attempts have been finalized and would have no effective influence on breeding bird reproduction or population recruitment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The allotment's current grazing use is also asynchronous with the migratory bird breeding season and has no effective influence on reproductive success, brood development, or nest habitat utility.

Mitigation: None.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: The project area is situated on the western margin of Canada lynx habitat encompassed by the White River National Forest, but the allotment itself is outside lynx habitats currently categorized and mapped within the Aldrich Lakes Lynx Analysis Unit. With the exception of 49 acres in the northeast corner of the allotment, these serviceberry-oakbrush-snowberry-manzanita shrublands and intermixed stands of pure aspen are greater than 500 meters from coniferous cover and would be classified as non-habitat for lynx.

The allotment's remaining 49 acres are composed of mixed stands of serviceberry, oakbrush, manzanita, mountain big sagebrush, snowberry, and chokecherry intermixed with an open aspen mosaic that lie within 500 meters of coniferous cover that could ostensibly qualify as winter foraging habitat for lynx. According to present lynx habitat evaluation protocols, this corner of the allotment would then be considered "other" habitat suitable for lynx use. By definition, "other" habitats do not provide winter cover adequate to support lynx's preferred prey (i.e., snowshoe hare), but may support hare during the summer months. However, the functional capacity of this isolated and diminutive coniferous forest stand to serve as hare habitat or lynx foraging habitat has severe constraints. This 11-acre stringer is steeply sloped (i.e., 37% grade), narrow (greatest width 100 meters), and is laterally separated from more substantive stands of coniferous forest by 1100 meters to the east and 1400 meters to the south. BLM biologists have encountered no evidence of snowshoe hare in this area during a number of allotment visits in April, May, and June of 2004 and 2005. Relative to the availability of lynx habitats in this LAU, this 49-acre tract would represent less than 1% of like-habitat and less than 0.2% of total lynx habitat extent.

The northern goshawk is a BLM-sensitive species that nests in mature aspen woodlands. Goshawk nesting densities are typically low in suitable habitat and there is limited potential that

goshawk nest on this allotment, but BLM biologists have encountered no evidence of goshawk nesting activity during site visits in April through July of 2004 and 2005.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action may affect, but would be unlikely to adversely affect about 49 acres of potential lynx summer foraging habitat. The very limited extent and isolated nature of coniferous habitat that is key to snowshoe hare distribution (and their use of adjacent aspen and deciduous shrub habitats) severely constrains lynx habitat potential in this allotment. The proposed duration and intensity of livestock grazing use is similar to current use, which has remained consistent with well-developed native understories, strong shrub expression, and appropriate levels of aspen regeneration—indicators that, under more favorable circumstances of habitat juxtaposition, would wholly complement the maintenance of seasonal lynx foraging habitat and prey populations.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Current grazing regimens have no apparent influence on community composition or ecological processes associated with the allotment's herbaceous, shrubland, or woodland communities. This alternative appears wholly consistent with the long-term maintenance of cover and forage conditions conducive to the support of goshawk nesting habitat and, potentially, incidental summer and winter foraging habitat for Canada lynx.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed and no-action alternatives would be expected to maintain or complement the continued development of late-seral conditions in the composition and structure of the allotment's aspen and deciduous shrub plant communities, and would thereby remain consistent with the maintenance of ecological conditions that provide cover and forage for lynx and goshawk and their associated prey species. Both alternatives, therefore, would not interfere with continued meeting of the land health standard for special status species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: Hazardous or solid wastes are not expected to be a part of the affected environment. However, these materials may accidentally be introduced in the environment through the implementation of the proposed action. Fuel, oil, grease, and antifreeze are all associated with vehicles associated with implementing the proposed action and would only be introduced into the environment because of equipment failure. Minute loss of these materials through normal operation of equipment, maintenance and fueling procedures are not considered spills. Spills are generally defined as the loss of large quantities of these materials into the environment and are determined to be a spill on a case-by-case basis.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action (Continuation of Current Management): For any given accident or incident involving hazardous materials, consequences

will be dependent on the volume and nature of the incident and material released. Short term impacts such as contaminations of soils, vegetation, and surface water could occur.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative (No Grazing): No hazardous wastes would be introduced into the environment under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: The permittee shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed action.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: Surface Water: The proposed action will affect the Milk Creek catchment area. Milk Creek is a tributary to the Yampa River and is located within stream segment 3c of the lower Yampa/Green River Basin. A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. The State has classified this stream segment as beneficial for the following uses: Aquatic Life Warm 1, Recreation 1b, Water Supply and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with the following table values: Dissolved Oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5-9.0, Fecal Coliform = 325/100 ml, E. Coli = 205/100 ml. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: An on-site evaluation was performed and it was noted that the effectiveness of the constructed pit reservoir could be questionable given the available water supply and local soil characteristics (permeability rates). However, existing reservoirs do exist on private lands to the west and they seemed to be functional. If the reservoir is successfully constructed and functional, increased livestock use near the water source will deteriorate vegetation leaving soils exposed to erosional processes. Accelerated erosion associated with reduced vegetal cover up gradient of the reservoir will elevate aggradation rates within the constructed reservoir. Additional maintenance using heavy equipment to remove sediment from the reservoir will be necessary. Increased maintenance will hinder revegetation measures.

Concentrations of Fecal Coliform within the affected watersheds will be elevated as the number of livestock using the area increases.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: The use of portable stock tanks to the west of the road and situated in the open park is a highly recommended, environmentally friendly alternative to reservoir construction. The use of portable stock tanks will limit surface disturbance related to reservoir construction and cattle use. In addition, if cattle grazing starts to deteriorate water quality or range conditions, the stock tanks can be relocated.

If reservoir construction is necessary, reservoir size will be no larger than ~20' x 20' and must be situated close to the roadway to catch runoff and minimize surface impacts. It is recommended the northern most location for the proposed reservoir not be used. The reservoir/tank location should be fenced (buck and pole) to keep ATV users out of reservoir and minimize the number of cattle on the roadway. In addition, Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) monitoring must be performed prior to reservoir construction. This will allow collection of critical baseline data necessary to assess impacts of cattle grazing on the system.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Water quality within stream segment 3c of the Yampa/Green River Basin currently meets standards set by the state. With proper mitigation, water quality should not be severely compromised due to the proposed action.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: Proper Functioning Condition analysis has not been performed on channels within this allotment. These assessments are scheduled to be performed in July 2006. The following observations were derived from field visits by BLM staff April through July 2005.

There are a number of ephemeral channels on this allotment that flow in response to snow melt until late May or early June. The vegetation associated with these channels is poorly differentiated from surrounding upland vegetation (i.e., forb-dominated aspen understories) and channel stability is derived largely from tree roots, woody debris and rock.

The largest channel system in the allotment (bisecting section 16) is a straight, very steep (20%), entrenched, and confined channel (Rosgen A3) whose bed is dominated by angular cobble. This channel bears virtually no herbaceous riparian character, but supports a diverse shrub complex including yellow willow, red-osier dogwood, Rocky Mountain maple, chokecherry, sumac, and currant. Kentucky bluegrass, bedstraw, and nettle are relatively common ground cover components on broader terraces adjacent to the channel. This channel supports limited intermittent flow, at least through July, and available water is generally confined to very small pools among the cobble. Due primarily to gradient, this reach has no foreseeable potential to develop more advanced riparian character, but functions in a manner consistent with its potential.

A small shallow wetland reach (about 300 feet long) associated with a long abandoned series of beaver dams is situated in the middle of section 16 about 400 feet west and about 160 feet above the larger channel. This perennially-fed reach is dominated by heavy Nebraska sedge and cattail growth intermixed with heavy yellow willow and chokecherry and is in proper functioning condition. Trace levels of Kentucky bluegrass, Canada thistle, and bluebur stickseed are present on the dams and margins of the ponds and appear to be in decline. The beaver dams on which this system relies are heavily vegetated, but the woody dam materials are ageing and probably are not strongly resistant to physical disturbance. This site's overflow is carried on the surface for a short ways by a small channel beneath young aspen canopies. This channel has no

differentiated riparian vegetation and the bed is controlled largely by root wads and woody debris.

Also during the inspection, a pond was located in Section 16, SE1/4 just north of RBC Road #48. It is unknown at this time if this pond exists due to runoff, seasonally fed or is a perennial source. However, it is believed to be a perennial, spring fed situation.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Because ephemeral flows within this allotment do not allow/provide for the development of defined riparian communities and the livestock turnout date would occur well after the cessation of runoff (i.e., no attraction to a water source), cattle-related influences on the nature and stability of ephemeral channels should be negligible.

The function of the allotment's largest channel system is believed to be relatively resistant to livestock use. Although this tributary may retain limited flows or residual pools into the livestock use-period, because the channel derives no stability from herbaceous vegetation and channel substrate is solely larger angular cobble with numerous debris dams and steep steps, it is unlikely that cattle would trail or otherwise directly affect channel features. Relatively short-duration, late-season cattle use should fully maintain the vigor and composition of herbaceous communities on adjacent terraces and would place no further pressure on the system's woody components.

Potential for cattle-related influences on the allotment's wetland community is discussed in the Aquatic Wildlife section below.

Regarding the pond in Section 16, a permanent monitoring station would need to be set up at this location and visited approximately two weeks after turn on and approximately four weeks after turn on to monitor use of the pond and if any changes are warranted for maintenance of this area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the current grazing regimen, all channel systems and riparian/wetland vegetation in the allotment are in proper functioning condition and in an improving or stable trend. The allotment's wetland or riparian communities would be expected to remain in this state under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The BLM will perform inventories on the various stream reaches and wetlands in the allotment during the summer of 2005. If the proposed action is determined to have a discernable influence on any of the riparian zones changes in management and/or fencing needs will be addressed with the permittee following the analysis work of the inventory performed by BLM.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Channels and associated riparian and wetland communities throughout this allotment's are in proper functioning condition and fully meet the land health standard under the no-action alternative. With the single exception of the beaver-derived wetlands, grazing deferment, relatively short-duration use, and grazing use limitations under the proposed action would be sufficient to maintain these conditions. In the event modified livestock use adversely influences the stability

and/or condition of wetlands associated with the abandoned beaver workings, means for excluding livestock use would be employed. As conditioned, the proposed action would not interfere with the continued meeting of the land health standards for riparian and wetland communities.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, no threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: No fragile soils will be encountered during by the proposed action. The following data is a product of an order III soil survey conducted by the NRCS. The accompanying table highlights important soil characteristics. A complete summary of this information can be found at the White River Field Office.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
77	Rhone-Northwater-Lamphier loams	3-50%	Brushy Loam/Aspen Woodland/Aspen Woodland	<2	Medium	Slight to very high	40-60

The soils in Rio Blanco County have been mapped by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in an Order III soil survey. This survey is available at the field office for further review. The pit reservoir is in soil mapping unit #77-Rhone-Northwater-Lamphier loams, on 3 to 50 percent slopes. This map unit is on mountainsides and valley sides. Areas are irregular in shape and are 40 to 500 acres in size. The native vegetation is mainly aspen, brush, and grasses. Elevation is 7,400 to 8,600 feet. The average annual precipitation is 18 to 22 inches, the average annual air temperature is 37 to 39 degrees F, and the average frost-free period is 45 to 75 days.

The Rhone soil is deep and well drained. It formed in residuum and colluvium derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the upper part of the surface layer is dark grayish brown loam about 8 inches thick. The lower part is dark grayish brown loam about 16 inches thick.

The next layer is grayish brown very channery loam 16 inches thick. The underlying material is brown very channery loam 10 inches thick. Fractured sandstone is at a depth of 50 inches. Depth to sandstone or shale ranges from 40 to 60 inches. Permeability of the Rhone soil is moderate. Available water capacity is high. Effective rooting depth is 40 to 60 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is slight to very high.

The Northwater soil is deep and well drained. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the upper part of the surface layer is grayish brown loam about 4 inches thick. The lower part is grayish brown loam about 16 inches thick. The upper 5 inches of the subsoil is brown loam, and the lower 16 inches is pale brown very channery sandy clay loam. The substratum is light yellowish brown very channery loam 6 inches thick. Fractured sandstone is at a depth of 47 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 40 to 60 inches. Permeability of the Northwater soil is moderate. Available water capacity is moderate. Effective rooting depth is 40 to 60 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is slight to very high.

The Lamphier soil is deep and well drained. It formed in alluvium and colluvium derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the surface is covered with a mat of partially decomposed leaves and twigs 2 inches thick. Typically, the upper part of the surface layer is brown loam about 4 inches thick. The lower part is brown loam about 22 inches thick. The upper 16 inches of the underlying material is reddish brown loam, and the lower part to a depth of 60 inches or more is reddish brown loam. In some areas the surface layer is fine sandy loam. Permeability of the Lamphier soil is moderate. Available water capacity is high. Effective rooting depth is 60 inches or more. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to high.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: An on-site evaluation was performed and it was noted that the effectiveness of the constructed pit reservoir could be problematic given the permeability rates and available water capacity of the affected soils. However, existing reservoirs do exist on private lands to the west and they seemed to be functional. If the reservoir is successfully constructed and is functional, increased livestock use near the water source will deteriorate vegetation leaving soils exposed to erosional processes. Accelerated erosion associated with reduced vegetal cover up gradient of the reservoir will elevate aggradation rates within the constructed reservoir. Additional maintenance using heavy equipment to remove sediment from the reservoir will be necessary. Increased maintenance will hinder revegetation measures.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: See Water Quality section.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Soils within the proposed work area currently exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, landform, and geologic processes. The proposed action will slightly increase soil compaction on location decreasing infiltration and permeability rates. However, the affected environment is relatively small and slight disturbance associated with the proposed actions will not significantly compromise the health of upland soils.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The BLM in these allotments are composed primarily of chokecherry, serviceberry, and snowberry, with some mature Aspen woodlands. The understory components and plant communities associated with this type of canopy cover, in general, is a developed grass-forb understory, along with good residual and litter throughout the federal acreage.

The following table lists the plant community appearance for the ecological sites or woodland types on allotments associated with the proposed action, along with the predominant plant species comprising the composition of each community. Forb species, though important to the diversity of a community and making up to 25 to 30% of the composition of several of the plant communities listed, are not presented in the following table because they generally are not contributors to the appearance or dominance of the community.

Ecological Site / Woodland Type	Plant Community Appearance	Predominant Plant Species in the Plant Community
Brushy Loam	Deciduous Shrub/Grass Shrubland	Serviceberry, oakbrush, snowberry, mountain brome, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, Letterman and Columbia needle grasses
Brushy Loam/Aspen Woodland	Deciduous Shrub/Aspen Woodland	Elk sedge, mountain brome, slender wheatgrass, cow parsnip, larkspur, monkshood, bluebells, yarrow, lupine, cinquefoil, vetch
Deep Loam	Grassland	Bluebunch wheatgrass, muttongrass, needle-and-thread, western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, big sagebrush, serviceberry, snowberry.
Dry Exposure	Grassland	Beardless bluebunch wheatgrass, needle-and-thread, June grass, Indian rice grass, fringed sage, buckwheat
Clayey Foothills	Grass Shrubland	Western wheatgrass, big sagebrush, muttongrass, beardless wheatgrass, snowberry, serviceberry

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: All of the range sites within the allotment represent plant communities within acceptable thresholds for healthy communities and within acceptable levels of a desired plant community as defined in the White River ROD/RMP. Vegetation production and species composition on these sites provided adequate cover for soil protection and forage production to meet forage demands. The grazing use proposed for the allotment is expected to maintain the current rangeland condition and is not likely to change the current seral rating of these range sites.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative is expected to maintain the current rangeland condition and seral range site ratings.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for vegetations: This standard is currently being met and is expected to be met under the proposed action.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Aquatic habitat within the allotment is confined to a short series of long-abandoned beaver ponds along an approximate 300-foot reach of valley. These small, shallow impoundments are heavily vegetated with Nebraska sedge, cattail, chokecherry, and a form of yellow willow and support an isolated population of chorus frogs and, presumably, a well-developed invertebrate community.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The allotment's aquatic habitat is contingent on maintaining the integrity of a series of ageing dam structures. Although the features are currently stable, concentrated trampling or trailing by livestock could compromise dam stability on several of the smaller ponds, leading to premature dam failure, accelerated filling of subtending ponds, and the consequent loss of wetland and aquatic functions of this site. The isolated location of this site, its steep adjacent slopes, and the relatively short duration of cattle use in the allotment would tend to limit the risk of aquatic habitat deterioration. However, the more sedentary nature of cattle in the vicinity of waters remains a concern. Reconnaissance of this site by BLM staff should be undertaken on an annual basis to assess livestock use patterns and the status of wetland habitat conditions.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Current livestock use has no apparent influence on these wetland habitats. Although vestiges of Kentucky bluegrass and Canada thistle may be indicators of more heavy and longer-duration use in the past, their contribution to the present community is minor and in apparent decline. Continuation of present grazing practices would be consistent with the long-term maintenance of this aquatic community.

Mitigation: In the event cattle do make substantive use of this wetland site, the nature and intensity of damage should be assessed and, if necessary, physical deterrents to livestock access across the dam faces (at a minimum) should be emplaced prior to the next season of use.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The land health standards for aquatic animal communities is presently being met (no action alternative). Although the proposed action calls for similar duration and intensity of livestock use, differences in habits and use patterns between sheep and cattle are cause for limited concern. Annual site reconnaissance and implementation of protective measures, when and where necessary, would ensure that the land health standards would continue to be met.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: This allotment serves principally as big game summer range and is typically used by deer and elk from May through December. Although the allotment's predominant mountain shrub type provides an important source of herbaceous and woody forage through the period of occupation, woodland cover and more persistent water sources are key to spring through fall distribution.

The allotment's well-developed herbaceous understories interspersed with a dense and diverse shrub complex and adjacent aspen woodlands provides ideal conditions for grouse reproductive functions, particularly during spring reproductive display and through the nesting and early brood-rearing period. These concentrated grouse use areas are only infrequently encountered on public land.

The pond site and fence alignment involve predominantly younger age-class aspen stands that do not provide structure favored or requisite for nesting by woodland raptors or cavity-dwelling species. The proposed sites were inspected by a BLM biologist in June 2005 with no indications of past or current raptor nest activity found.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed grazing use regimen is similar to that currently permitted, and under these conditions, herbaceous understories throughout the allotment provide a well-developed and diverse forage and cover base for all resident wildlife functions. The relatively short duration of use and moderate use limitations, largely during the plant's dormant season, would be effective in maintaining herbaceous community composition and plant vigor. Use limitations would help ensure that sufficient residual material remains after the use period for small mammal forage and cover needs during the fall and winter. A minor concern persists for cattle's influence on aspen regeneration in areas near water sources. These sites, by providing water and cool microclimates during the warmest months of the year, may be subjected to concentrated cattle use for up to 5 weeks. With diminishing supplies of herbaceous forage, aspen suckers may be subject to intensive browsing use by cattle later in the use period. Although the potential consequences of this use on wildlife habitat utility would be somewhat mitigated by location (i.e., proposed pond location adjacent to a well-traveled Forest Service access route—sites normally avoided by more sensitive wildlife), the extent and intensity of such effects should be assessed integral with rangeland monitoring and this information used to help evaluate whether adjustments in management are necessary to maintain the long-term viability of the allotment's aspen stands in close proximity to water.

Construction of the fence, cattleguards, and pond after mid-July would avoid the reproductive season for all resident wildlife and would therefore have only minor and temporary influence on local big game, grouse, and nongame abundance and distribution.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No construction activities would be authorized that could influence resident wildlife distribution or abundance. Current use of the allotment by sheep is short term, outside important wildlife timeframes, and has little apparent influence on the condition or utility of wildlife habitats available within the allotment.

Mitigation: Rangeland monitoring should include, at a minimum, a transecting method that helps evaluate the intensity and distribution of aspen browsing by cattle, including livestock's influence on the density, growth form, and ultimate survival of aspen regeneration, particularly those stands in close proximity to livestock water sources.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The land health standards for animal communities is presently being met (no action alternative). Although the proposed action calls for similar duration and intensity of livestock use, differences in habits and use patterns between sheep and cattle are cause for limited concern. Although widespread suppression of aspen recruitment is considered unlikely under the proposed grazing regimen, annual rangeland monitoring that integrates evaluation of aspen reproduction would help evaluate whether adjustments in management are required to maintain the long-term viability of the allotment's aspen stands, particularly those in close proximity to water. With this caveat, there is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action would contradict continued meeting of the land health standard for animal communities.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management			X
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology	X		
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: Rio Blanco County Road 48 bisects the grazing allotment. It is the primary access to large areas of US Forest Service lands that are utilized by the public for recreation and other purposes. The allotment is located within an area where motorized off-road travel is limited to May 1 through October 1 of each year. The remainder of the year motorized travel is limited to existing routes only. At present, little trail proliferation is occurring by off-road travel by motorized vehicles due to lack of easily traveled routes off of Rio Blanco County road 48.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: By installing fence and pond, new routes may begin to occur due to identifiable travel corridor created for fence and pond

installation. This may lead to increased trail proliferation due to motorized travel. New cattle guard installation in RBC 48 may impede travel for those traveling to US Forest Service lands.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: When traveling to pond location, machinery used to construct the pond should go “blade-up” until pond location has been reached to not create travel route. Additionally, where new fence leaves RBC 48 at US Forest Service land boundary and heads north and south, no vegetation should be cleared in fence right-of-way for at least 100 yards as to dissuade motorized travel along fence line.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed fence goes through approximately 1,300 feet of mature aspen. The pond is also proposed within a mature aspen stand. The White River land use plan allows for harvest of aspen within the Danforth/Jensen Geographic Reference Area within which the project area is included.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: With the proposed mitigation less than five cords of aspen would be removed. This would not impact the integrity of the stands or make them more susceptible to disease.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts.

Mitigation: Clearing of the fenceline within aspen stands would be by hand using chainsaws or equivalent. Only those trees within three feet of the line may be severed. Trees removed at the pond site and fence line must be severed and hand cut down to a 4 inch diameter and placed along the edge of the disturbance. The applicant may acquire a forest products permit and remove this wood for personal use.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, LLC is the BLM authorized grazing lease holder on the Yellow Jacket (06858) and Yellow Jacket – South (06826) allotments. The ranch is new to the cattle industry and in recent history was known as a sheep operation. The ranch also has private lands and BLM leases in the Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) that share boundaries with the White River Field Office. The ranch currently operates a cow/calf cattle grazing system on various allotments managed by LSFO with a winter feeding program on private lands.

The table below reflects the total number of acres and the amount of public acres within each of the allotments under this proposal:

Pasture Name	Total Acres	Acres of Public Lands
Yellow Jacket-South (06826)	227	227
Yellow Jacket (06858)	1,927	420

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed grazing management will continue to provide the plant communities within the Yellow Jacket and Yellow Jacket – South Allotments adequate opportunity for regrowth and seed production following grazing. Based on past grazing patterns and use, the grazing time frames only include part of the growing season. Therefore, plants will have time for growth and/or regrowth to reach maturity for the increased level of plant vigor which was recently noted during all of the allotment inspections.

The proposal for these allotments will be made to turn them into one pasture, see attached map for details. The following table is a summarization of the Livestock Grazing Capacity, which is broken down by surface ownership (BLM, Private), soil units and Acres/AUM for the pasture (allotments). This table shows an estimated carrying capacity of livestock for the land ownership associated with the proposed action. The estimated grazing capacity may exceed the grazing periods proposed. The lack of available water will limit the eastern most area of the pasture. The calculations are based on moderate stocking levels which are generally less than the stocking rates recommended by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the specific ecological sites. The reason for these moderate stocking levels is that they meet the Colorado public land health standards in relation to the rangeland's carrying capacity and current rangeland conditions.

Acres and AUM breakdown for the Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch (Yellow Jacket and Yellow Jacket – South Allotments) Livestock Grazing Capacity described by ecological sites are as follows:

SOIL UNIT/Yellow Jacket – South (06826)	ECOLOGICAL SITE	BLM Acres	Fair Acres / AUM	Fair Total AUMs
57/Owen Creek-Jerry-Burnette loams, 5-35% slopes	Brushy Loam	2.980	8	0
44/Jerry loam, 12-45% slopes	Brushy Loam	151.713	8	19
77/Rhone-Northwater-Lamphier loams, 3-50%	Brushy Loam/Aspen Woodland/Aspen Woodland	12.146	8	1
45/Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone complex, 8-65% slopes	Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	11.560	8	1
103/Work Loam, 15-25% slopes	Deep	17.866	8	2
23/Cochetopa Loam, 9-50% slopes	Brushy Loam	22.673	8	2
98/Waybe-Vandamore Variant-RO Complex, 5-30% slopes	Dry Exposure	8.224	15	0
Totals:		227.16		25

SOIL UNIT/Yellow Jacket (06858)	ECOLOGICAL SITE	BLM Acres	Fair Acres / AUM	Fair Total AUMs
45/Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone Complex, 8-65% slopes	Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	190.62	8	21

SOIL UNIT/Yellow Jacket (06858)	ECOLOGICAL SITE	BLM Acres	Fair Acres / AUM	Fair Total AUMs
14/Burkley-Abor Clay Loams, 5-30% slopes	Clayey Foothills	1.256	9	0
98/Waybe-Vandamore Variant-RO Complex, 5-30% slopes	Dry Exposure	2.443	15	0
57/Owen Creek-Jerry-Burnette loams, 5-35% slopes	Brushy Loam	5.197	8	0
44/Jerry loam, 12-45% slopes	Brushy Loam	70.524	8	8
77/Rhone-Northwater-Lamphier loams, 3-50% slopes	Brushy Loam/Aspen Woodland/Aspen Woodland	149.704	8	18
Totals:		419.73		47

SOIL UNIT/Yellow Jacket (06858)	ECOLOGICAL SITE	PVT Acres	Fair Acres / AUM	Fair Total AUMs
77/Rhone-Northwater-Lamphier loams, 3-50%	Brushy Loam/Aspen Woodland/Aspen Woodland	183.63	8	23
57/Owen Creek-Jerry-Burnette loams, 5-35% slopes	Brushy Loam	76.235	8	9
14/Burkley-Abor Clay Loams, 5-30% slopes	Clayey Foothills	12.50	9	1
45/Jerry-Thornburgh-Rhone Complex, 8-65% slopes	Brushy Loam/Brushy Loam	955.938	8	120
98/Waybe-Vandamore Variant-RO Complex, 5-30% slopes	Dry Exposure	91.70	15	5
80/Shawa loam, 3-8% slopes	Brushy Loam/Aspen Woodland/Aspen Woodland	29.055	8	3
44/Jerry loam, 12-45% slopes	Brushy Loam	173.066	8	22
57/Owen Creek-Jerry-Burnette loams, 5-35% slopes	Brushy Loam	5.197	8	0
Totals:		1506.88		183

With regulated livestock use in this pasture at 50% utilization and control of any noxious weed issues this pasture will meet the standards. The primary water source is located on private lands, Township 2 North, Range 92 West, Section 8 and 9; and locally known as Beaver Creek. It is anticipated that the management of rangelands by Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, LLC will not be significantly impaired by implementation of the proposed action, as the ranch manager was instrumental in the development of this action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, the change-in-kind of livestock grazing use would not be permitted on public lands. Grazing would likely continue on the private lands within the boundaries of the allotment which would require fencing off of public lands. The additional amount of fencing would be cumbersome in respects to costs and resource impacts such as wildlife movement. The applicant would experience a negative economic impact as they are dependent upon public land grazing in their livestock operation. When permitted livestock are on public lands, the permittee/lessee can conserve forage on other lands to meet future livestock requirements. Livestock producers are dependent on this permitted grazing use on public lands to ensure the economic viability of his/her ranching operation.

Mitigation: The BLM will continue to make allotment inspections to monitor cattle use to determine any potential adverse impacts to other resource values. If any concerns arise from cattle use the BLM and the permittee will implement appropriate mitigation measures to ensure future rangeland health standards and guidelines will continue to be met.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

The project area most resembles a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). SPM physical and social recreation setting is typically characterized by a natural appearing environment with few administrative controls, low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to hunting recreationists.

Mitigation: None.

VISUAL RESOURCE

Affected Environment: The proposed action is within a VRM class II area. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed fence and ponds are small in scale relative to the surrounding landscape; therefore, any modifications will be unseen to the casual observer, and VRM II objectives will be met. Furthermore, any disturbed vegetation will return making the proposed actions virtually unnoticeable within a period of a few years.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impact on visual resources.

Mitigation: Remove as little vegetation as possible during construction.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: Cumulative impacts from the proposed action would not exceed those discussed in the White River Resource Area RMP and/or White River Resource Area Grazing Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: The Grazing Advisory Board is notified of impending Grazing Permit renewals. Also, individual letters are sent to the lessees/permittees informing them that their lease is up for renewal and request any information they want included in or taken into consideration during the renewal process.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights, Soils
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Gabrielle Elliott	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Bob Fowler	Forester	Invasive, Non-Native Species, Forest Management
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Vern Rholl	Natural Resource Specialist	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Melissa Kindall	Range Technician	Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Soils, Vegetation, Rangeland Management
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Recreation, Access and Transportation, Visual Resources
Ken Holsinger	Fire Ecologist	Fire Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Valerie Dobrich	Wild Horse Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2004-197-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the implementation of the proposed action, with the addition of the mitigation listed below. Completion of the fence and reconstruction and/or repairs to all other fences requiring upgrading to functioning condition is mandatory before any livestock are allowed to be turned out this fiscal year.

Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, Ltd. will run no more than 100 pairs plus 5 bulls starting July 15 until August 25 with a 50% utilization level. Davidson Yellow Jacket Ranch, Ltd will also construct approximately ½ mile of barbed, four-wire lay-down fence on the section line between Sections 16 and 15 as per BLM standards with approval by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to make Pasture 1 a complete and enclosed pasture. This fence will become the new boundary fence between the BLM and the White River National Forest. The ranch will construct a small reservoir, approximately 20 foot X 20 foot, to catch water from road runoff and a nearby spring just off of RBC Road #15 at a site identified by BLM personnel. The ranch will also install two cattleguards; one 16 foot cattleguard at the boundary of USFS and BLM on RBC Road #48 and one 24 foot cattleguard at the intersection of RBC Road #15 and #48. Because these cattleguards are located on country roads the construction will be pursuant to structure designs approved by the Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge Department.

The grazing period for the change in livestock use is consistent with the minimum rest periods developed in the White River ROD/RMP and are also consistent with the Livestock Grazing Management Guidelines developed for the Colorado Public Land Standards for Rangeland Health. Adjustments will be made in the grazing plan to insure that land use plan resource objectives are met or exceeded when the grazing permit renewal is completed in 2006. Until that time PFC inventory will be completed and range photo plots established as addressed in the proposed action.

MITIGATION MEASURES: 1. Revegetate disturbed surfaces associated with construction of the pit reservoir.

2. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are

uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

3. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

4. Any identified population(s) of a noxious weed species will be dealt with on a case-by-case and as needed basis. From the White River ROD/RMP, Appendix B, #179, a Pesticide Use Proposal will be prepared and approved prior to spraying. All spraying would be under the control of a certified applicator. Herbicides must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

5. The permittee shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed action.

6. The reservoir size will be no larger than ~20' x 20' and must be situated close to the roadway to catch runoff and minimize surface impacts. The northern most location for the proposed reservoir shall not be used. The reservoir/tank location shall be fenced (buck and pole) to keep ATV users out of reservoir and minimize the number of cattle on the roadway.

7. Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) monitoring must be performed prior to reservoir construction. This will allow collection of critical baseline data necessary to assess impacts of cattle grazing on the system.

8. The BLM will perform inventories on the various stream reaches and wetlands in the allotment during the summer of 2005. If the proposed action is determined to have a discernable influence on any of the riparian zones changes in management and/or fencing needs will be addressed with the permittee following the analysis work of the inventory performed by BLM.

9. In the event cattle do make substantive use of this wetland site, the nature and intensity of damage should be assessed and, if necessary, physical deterrents to livestock access across the dam faces (at a minimum) should be emplaced prior to the next season of use.

10. Rangeland monitoring shall include, at a minimum, a transecting method that helps evaluate the intensity and distribution of aspen browsing by cattle, including livestock's influence on the density, growth form, and ultimate survival of aspen regeneration, particularly those stands in close proximity to livestock water sources.

11. When traveling to the pond location, machinery used to construct the pond shall go "blade-up" until pond location has been reached so not to create a new travel route. Additionally, where new fence leaves RBC 48 at US Forest Service land boundary and heads north and south, no vegetation should be cleared in fence right-of-way for at least 100 yards as to dissuade motorized travel along fence line.

12. Clearing of the fenceline within aspen stands will be done by hand using chainsaws or equivalent. Only those trees within three feet of the line may be severed. Trees removed at the pond site and fence line must be severed and hand cut down to a 4 inch diameter and placed along the edge of the disturbance. The applicant may acquire a forest products permit and remove this wood for personal use.

13. The BLM will continue to make allotment inspections to monitor cattle use to determine any potential adverse impacts to other resource values. If any concerns arise from cattle use the BLM and the permittee will implement appropriate mitigation measures to ensure future rangeland health standards and guidelines will continue to be met.

14. Remove as little vegetation as possible during construction.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance and/or Monitoring will be done by the range staff on a scheduled basis as per mitigation.

NAME OF PREPARER: Melissa J. Kindall

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline P. Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

Grant Y. Paine
for Field Manager

DATE SIGNED:

7/14/05

ATTACHMENTS: Location map of the proposed action.
Allotment and Pasture Map

Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2004-197-EA

